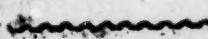


# **'DOES YOU LOVE GOD?'**

**AN INCIDENT SHOWING THE**

**POWER OF A SIMPLE QUESTION.**



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DOES YOU LOVE GOD?

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## **"DOES YOU LOVE GOD?"**

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**"Does you love God?"**

The question came from a sweet pair of lips. Opposite sat a young gentleman of striking exterior. He and the child were travelling in a stage coach. The latter sat on her mother's knee. Her little face, beautiful beyond description, looked out from a frame of delicate lace-work. For four hours the coach had been toiling on over an unequal road; and the child had been very winning in her little ways,—lispings songs; lifting her bright blue eyes often to her mother's face; then falling back, in a little old-fashioned, contented way, into her mother's arms, saying by the mute action, "I am happy here."

For more than an hour, the dear babe, scarce yet entering the rosy threshold of her fifth year, had been answering the smiles of the young man, who had been pleased with her beauty.

He had nodded his head to her little tunes; he had offered her his pearl-handled penknife to play with; and, at last, his heart went over to her at every glance. The mild blue eyes, full of the innocence of a holy love and a trusting faith, made his pulses leap with a purer joy; and, as the coach rattled on, he began to wish the end of the journey were not so very near.

The child had been sitting for the last fifteen minutes regarding the young man with a glance that seemed almost solemn; neither smiling at his caresses nor at the dear face that bent above her.

A thoughtfulness seemed to spread over the young brow that had never yet been shadowed by care; and as the coach stopped at the inn-door, and the passengers moved uneasily preparatory to leaving, she bent towards the young man, and lisped in her childish voice, these words:—"Does you love God?"

He did not understand at first, in the confusion, and bent over nearer; and the voice asked again, clearly, almost eagerly,—

"Does you love God?" the thoughtful, inquiring eyes, meantime beaming into his own.

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The young man drew back hastily blushing up to the very roots of his hair. He looked in a sort of confused abrupt way at the child, who, frightened at his manner, had hidden her face in her mother's bosom; turned to the coach-door; gave another look back, as if he longed to see her face; and then left the coach.

He hurried to his hotel; but the little voice went with him. There seemed an echo in his heart, constantly repeating the question of the child,—“Does you love God?”

Several gay young men met him at his hotel. They appeared to have been waiting for him, and welcomed him with mirth that was almost boisterous. They had prepared an elegant supper; and after he had been to his room, escorted him to the table. The full gleam of the gas fell upon the glittering furniture; red wines threw shadows of a lustrous crimson hue athwart the snowy linen. There were mirth, wit, faces lighted with pleasure,—everything to charm the eye and please the palate; but the young man was conscious of a void never experienced before. His heart ached to see the child again; and ever and anon he seemed to hear her words, —“Does you love God?”

## DOES YOU LOVE GOD?

His name was Gilbert. Only twenty-three years of age, he was a good scholar, and esteemed by his friends a genius. Already he had made his mark as a writer; but he had never thought, as he thought to-night, on the solemn import of that simple question,—  
 “Does you love God?”

It came to him when he held the red wine to his lips; it was heard amid the clatter of the billiard-balls, and the shouts of merry laughter that filled the wide room, everywhere. Whichever way he turned, he saw the earnest glance of that blue-eyed child, heard the low voice singing, the low voice laughing, the low voice asking thrillingly,—  
 “Does you love God?”

It followed him to his bedside. He had tried to drown it in wine, in song, in careless levity. He strove to sleep it away, but heard it in his dreams.

The next night, he met a fashionable friend. He was to take her to some place of pleasure. She was very beautiful in dazzling robing.—The gleam of pearls, and the lustres of silk and lace vied with each other to enhance her loveliness; but even as she came sailing into the room with smiles upon her young red lips and a welcome in her words, there came

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too, floating noiselessly at her side the presence of that angel-child. The better feelings her innocent presence had awakened were yet warm ; and, before he knew it, the young man said, quickly and earnestly, "Does you love God?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the young girl, with a start of surprise.

"I was thinking, as you came in, of a lovely child I saw yesterday," he replied. "As I was in the act of leaving the coach, she suddenly looked up, and asked me that question."

"And what, pray, put it into the child's head? What did you answer?"

"I am ashamed to say, I was not prepared with an answer," replied the young man, casting down his eyes.

That night pleasure had no gratification for him. His feet trod languidly the mazes of the dance ; his smiles were forced : and more than once, it was said of him, "He does not seem himself."

No; he was not like the gay thoughtless self of former years. There was a still pool lying in his bosom, the waters of which had never before been disturbed. Now a little



child had dropped a pebble in, and the vibration was to go on through eternity.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dust soiled and travel-weary, a thoughtful man walked through the principal street of a large western city. As he went on, apparently absorbed in his own meditations, his eye accidentally encountered a face looking down from the window of a handsome house. His whole countenance suddenly changed. He paused an instant, looking eagerly at the window; and in another moment his hand was on the bell-handle. He was ushered into the very room where sat the lady of the house.

"You will pardon my intrusion," he said, "but I could not pass by, after seeing you accidentally at the window. I have never forgotten you nor your little girl, who five years ago, in a stage coach, put to me the artless question, 'Does you love God?' Do you remember?"

"I think I do," said the lady smilingly, "from the circumstance that you seemed so much startled and confused; but my dear child asked almost every person with whom we met that or similar questions."

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## DOES YOU LOVE GOD?

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"Her innocent face is engraven on my heart," said the young man with much emotion. "Never, since that day, have I been tempted to do that which my conscience would not sanction, but the earnest, serious gaze with which she regarded me before she asked that question, has come to my mind. Would she remember me, do you think? Absurd thought? of course she would not. But I should remember her anywhere, under any circumstances. Can I not see her, madam? Is she at home with you? I long to take her in my arms, and hear once more the voice that God has used to draw my heart to Him."

Strange that, in his eagerness, he did not notice that palling cheek, the quiver of the mother's lips, the sudden placing of her hand against her heart! Strange also that he did not mark the absence of pattering feet; of little gentle indications that a child's fingers had been busy in the room about him.

Suddenly, as he ceased speaking, there came over him a startling consciousness. He saw the tear-stained cheek turned towards the window; he noticed the garments of sombre hue; *he heard the silence reigning within.*

"Madam—is—the child——?"

"She is in heaven," came low and brokenly from the trembling lips.

The young man sank back on his seat, agitated, dumb—sorrowful that he had so rudely torn open the still bleeding wound in that womanly heart.

"This is sad tidings," he said, after a long pause, and his voice was troubled. "Dear little angel! she is, then, speaking to me from the grave."

The mother arose, and beckoned him to follow her. Into a little hallowed chamber she went, where, in a case, were the books the child loved, her Bible, her beautiful rewards, her childish toys.

"There," said the mother, now quite broken down, and sobbing as she spoke, "there is all that is left on earth of precious Nettie."

"No, madam; that is not all that is left: I am here a monument of God's mercy, made so through her holy influence. Before she asked me that question on that eventful day, my mind was a chaos of doubt, of bewildering and conflicting errors. I had dared to question the existence of an Almighty Creator. I had defyingly thrown my taunts at Him,

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who, in great forbearance, has forgiven me. My influence for evil was unlimited; because men looked up to me, and chose me for their leader. I was going the downward path,—groping blindly in a great labyrinth of error, and dragging others with me. Madam, by this time I might have been a debauchee, a libertine, a God-defying wretch, but for her unlooked-for question—

"Does you love God?"

"Oh! that voice! that look! that almost infinite sorrow! that divine pity, that, through her, glanced into my soul! Madam, these tears bear witness that your child left more than precious dust and perishing toys."

Utterly broken down, the strong man wept like a child. All he said was true; for he held the hearts of men in his hands. In genius, he was one of the strong ones of the earth; and all that powerful mind was engaged in spreading the tidings of man's salvation through Jesus Christ.

Oh! little children do a mighty work.

Reader, in the sweet accents of that babe of heaven, is there not a voice in your heart asking,—

"Does you love God?"

